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The salted caramel sundae at the General Greene

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The pros



The top ten pastry chefs you need to know

1 Robert Truitt, Corton

The undersung Truitt honed his avant approach at Spain's molecular temple El Bulli, and locally at the shuttered Room 4 Dessert. He's known for his experimentation and methodical presentations (he's currently playing with silicone molds to create 3-D landscapes on the plate). However, Truitt keeps the flavors familiar: Raspberries may be blasted with liquid nitrogen, but they still taste like the ripe, humble fruit. 239 West Broadway between Walker and White Sts (212-219-2777, cortonnyc.com)

2 Nicholas Morgenstern, the General Greene

The former Gilt and Gramercy Tavern pastry chef applies his classical roots to all-American standards at his Fort Greene eatery. Quality ingredients are a hallmark: There's fruity Felchlin Swiss chocolate in the chocolate chip cookies, lard buttering up the flaky apple-pie crust, and items like Counter Culture coffee enriching his signature ice creams. 229 DeKalb Ave at Clermont Ave, Fort Greene, Brooklyn (718-222-1510, thegeneralgreene.com)

3 François Payard, FC

Chocolate Bar The godfather of NYC's French pastry scene, Payard helped shape the dessert menus at Le Bernardin and Daniel. He earned a James Beard Award in 1995 for his trouble. Currently Payard is creating his lavish, decadent desserts inside the Mauboussin boutique, but he'll have more room to play when his François Payard Bakery (FPB) opens this September. *Mauboussin boutique*, 714 Madison Ave between 63rd and 64th Sts, fourth floor (212-759-1600, payard.com)

4 Dominique Ansel, Daniel

Ansel spent seven years with the formidable Parisian pastry outfit Fauchon before joining Daniel. His Louvre-worthy pastry portraiture leans on international flavors—particularly Asian ones—and a combination of modern and classic French techniques. (Witness a cloud of orange foam scented with anise and ginger that accompanies a hazelnut-chocolate mousse.) 60 E 65th St between Madison and Park Aves (212-288-0033, danielnyc.com)

5 Karen DeMasco, Locanda Verde

DeMasco specializes in polished, straightforward presentations that combine seasonal American flavors with Italian ingredients and recipes. The seven-year vet of Tom Colicchio's Craft empire and James Beard Award winner raids the savory pantry, using ingredients such as extra-virgin olive oil and white balsamic vinegar to add flavorful, aromatic accents to cakes, ice creams and sauces. 377 Greenwich St between Franklin and North Moore Sts (212-925-3797, locandaverdenyc.com)

1896 | Austrian immigrant Leo Hirshfield sells chewy chocolate treats from his Brooklyn store. In 1908, he dubs them Tootsie Rolls and begins to manufacture the penny candies in Manhattan.



1903 | *The New York Times* writes that "New York is pre-eminently the candy city of the world. It has more establishments engaged in its manufacture and more stores handling it than any other city on earth."



And their desserts
(turn the page)

By **Raquel Pelzel** Photographs by **Roger Hagadone**

- 6 Johnny Iuzzini, Jean Georges** Innovative and daring, this tattooed toque took home a James Beard Award in 2006 and is about to debut as head judge of *Top Chef: Just Desserts*. At Jean Georges, he turns out an ambitious roster of “fourplays” (four bites on one plate exploring a single theme). His renegade spirit also comes through in unexpected flavor pairings and a penchant for molecular gastronomy. *Trump International Hotel & Tower, 1 Central Park West at Columbus Circle (212-299-3900, jean-georges.com)*
- 7 Jacques Torres, Jacques Torres Chocolate** The Provence-born chef cut his teeth constructing cheeky, baroque French desserts at Le Cirque in the '90s (his famous “chocolate stove” was a cake served inside an edible chocolate oven). These days he juggles a gig as dean of pastry studies at the French Culinary Institute and a cocoa empire that includes four stores throughout New York City. Whimsical chocolates by the piece—like meticulously decorated bonbons—are his specialty. *Multiple locations, visit mrchocolate.com*
- 8 Michael Laiskonis, Le Bernardin** This Michigan import and James Beard Award winner has spent the past six years manning the pastry kitchen at Le Bernardin. Using chef Eric Ripert’s light, elegant approach as a template, Laiskonis produces sophisticated, sculptural desserts rooted in French pastry traditions. Molecular gastronomy methods modernize his recipes, as do Asian ingredients—green tea and yuzu are staples. *155 W 51st St between Sixth and Seventh Aves (212-554-1515, le-bernardin.com)*
- 9 Gina DePalma, Babbo** After more than 11 years as pastry chef at Mario Batali’s Babbo, James Beard Award winner Gina DePalma is still turning out some of the city’s most consistent Italian sweets. She has made a career out of simple but lusty desserts that call upon the same high-quality ingredients used for the restaurant’s savory menu: Olive oil works its way into her gelato, balsamic vinegar into her custard and semolina into a rich pudding. *110 Waverly Pl between Sixth Ave and MacDougal St (212-777-0303, babbonyc.com)*
- 10 Matthew Lodes, Wallsé** As the pastry honcho for chef Kurt Gutenbrunner’s family of Austrian eateries, Lodes executes tantalizing Central European desserts like *mohr im hemd* (warm chocolate cake) and *marillenknödel* (apricot dumplings) using skills he honed at Financier Patisserie and the erstwhile Lutèce. His secret: peak market produce, like succulent peaches and pulpy huckleberries, that help brighten the region’s famously fussy recipes. *344 W 11th St at Washington St (212-352-2300, wallsrestaurant.com)*

1907 | Nathan Radutzky emigrates from Ukraine and starts producing halvah on the Lower East Side. More than 100 years later, Joyva still produces his candies—halvah, jelly rings and more—right in Brooklyn.



1912 | Nabisco produces the first Oreo cookie at its Manhattan factory, now the site of Chelsea Market.

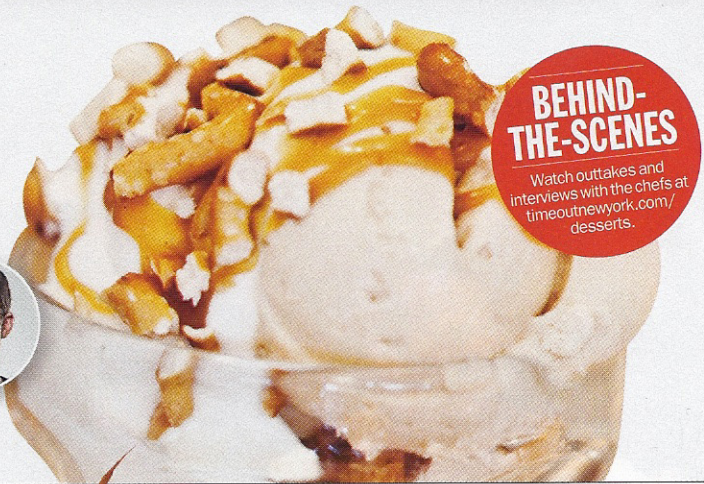


Their creations



1 Brioche at Corton Truitt's toad-in-the-hole revision offers a "yolk"—passion fruit and tangy yogurt—submerged in house-made brioche and topped with Stilton, banana, brioche- and rum-infused ice cream, and Valrhona chocolate. *With prix-fixe \$85*

2 Salted caramel sundae at the General Greene Morgenstern presents salted-caramel ice cream garnished with barely sweetened whipped cream, pretzels and streaks of caramel. Dig through for chunks of fudgy caramel brownie hidden underneath. \$6



BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Watch outtakes and interviews with the chefs at timeoutnewyork.com/desserts.



3 George V at FC Chocolate Bar Layers of black cocoa biscuit highlight rich dark-chocolate and vanilla-bean-flecked mousses, dark caramel and salty roasted peanuts. The cylinder is finished with a chocolate glaze. \$6.50



4 Cilantro-lime macerated papaya at Daniel Cilantro brings a fresh flavor to this lime and almond *dacquoise*—a kind of airy, layered meringue accented with papaya, Buddha's-hand marmalade and guava sorbet. *A la carte \$18, with prix-fixe \$105*



5 Sweet-corn budino at Locanda Verde Sweet corn gets superstar treatment in DeMasco's luscious pudding: Inky blueberry sauce and refreshing sorbeto counter the *budino's* richness, while fresh-made caramel popcorn contributes salt and crunch. \$9



6 The Garden Fourplay at Jean Georges Start in the lower-right quadrant, where chocolate cream is paired with cocoa-dusted *mochi*, toasted hazelnuts and blackberry gelée. Raspberry soda comes next, topped with diced melon and birch-infused cream. The left side explores vegetal elements: luzzini's carrot cake is a plank of solidified carrot juice, while the sweet-pea ice cream in the lower left is set atop an almond macaron. *With prix-fixe \$98*



7 12-piece chocolate box at Jacques Torres Chocolate A carefully guarded blend of chocolate sourced from Ghana and the Americas constitutes the mellow, slightly bitter shells of these beautifully wrought treats. Top-notch fillings shine—you might find ripe raspberries, fresh-squeezed lemon juice or fragrant spices secreted inside. \$18



8 Black Sesame-Cherry at Le Bernardin Laiskonis transforms sour cherries into glistening orbs. The cherries, combined with *yuzu* meringue and mandarin orange sorbet, provide an acidic foil for the earthy black-sesame panna cotta. *With prix-fixe \$70-\$112*



9 Saffron panna cotta at Babbo A quivering knob of milky saffron-infused panna cotta rests on a pool of bittersweet chamomile- and apricot *marmellata* in DePalma's elegant yet unfussy dessert. A scoop of *sorbeto* made from ripe, local apricots rounds it out. \$13



10 Mozartkugel at Wallsé This knockout sphere of dark-chocolate mousse encircles a core of pistachio parfait, studded with nougat and chopped Sicilian pistachios. Beneath the mousse, dig for crumbly chocolate, pistachio streusel and frozen cocoa powder. \$12

1954 | Serendipity 3 opens in midtown, dishing out frozen hot chocolate in gigantic goblets. The lives of Midwestern tourists are forever changed.

1987 | Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten starts the molten chocolate cake craze, serving it at midtown's long-shuttered Lafayette restaurant. By the early '90s, the cake has been replicated on menus around the city.

